

Overview of Ithaca Video Project Pamela Susan Hawkins

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Summary

Director Philip Mallory Jones. Annual Ithaca Video Festival 1975-84. Festival began to tour in 1976. The intended name of the organization was Ithaca Video Project; when applying for non-profit status, the name was changed erroneously to Ithaca Video Projects. Both names appear in many texts. The organization served as a media resource facility for the Ithaca region, providing workshops in photography, video, animation and graphic design, along with equipment loans and access to post-production facilities. IVP also provided production assistance to other artists. IVP initiated the Ithaca Video Festival, a juried program of video, selected from entries from around the world. The Festival was at first screened locally at the Herbert Johnson Museum but traveled widely around the State and nationally. IVP was also committed to animation, which was used in dramatic and documentary productions. The approach combined video, film and photographs using computer-based video technology to achieve frame-by-frame compositions. IVP produced series concerning Afro-Americans in the US and Caribbean. According to the Citizens Media Directory, National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting, (1977), in 1977 IVP's "primary activity is the production of videotapes and films for television broadcast. It also maintains a media resource center to assist other professional artists in the production of film and video projects". Philip Mallory Jones alone and in collaboration with other makers, produced a number of important tapes which received wide distribution and broadcast.

"In various ways, we make portraits. We don't like to call our work documentaries. Our tapes are as subjective as a portrait. Our work tends to be our interpretation of people and events. We don't make a pretense of being objective". Philip Mallory Jones (10)

Chronology of Ithaca Video Project

1971-1974

Ithaca Video Project incorporated in 1971. In an Ithaca Video Projects' brochure from prior to 1974, IVP describes its mission: "a not-for-profit, educational organization that provides access to portable video tape equipment, consultation and instruction in the creative uses of the video medium. We encourage individuals and community groups to initiate projects of all types - issue-oriented, artistic, experimental. An important part of our program is the development of a two-way communications system where members of the greater Ithaca area can engage in public dialogues via the local cable TV system. At IVP, we work to make access to video and related media a reality for people who have traditionally been denied expression through electronic media. Finally we see video as an art form. IVP is rapidly becoming the foundation for a wide range of collaborations between artists and experiments in various media."

The program offered:

- Video Storefront for equipment access, operational workshops, editing and production studio, and a tape library (for loan dubbing and international tape exchange);
- Video Projections, "public seminars on the imaginative and effective use of video and complimentary media";

- Multi-Media Performances in which “video artists collaborate with artists in film, dance, music, poetry and graphics”;
- Videomation, a technology of creating moving images developed by Phillip Mallory Jones “which is a synthesis of electronic, film and graphic images into a multi-level composite image. This technique, which is analogous to the basic characteristics of African drumming and singing, is being used in film/tape on black music”;
- Traveling Multi-Media Events to create “environments which expose people to new and stimulating relationships between video, film, poetry, dance, music and graphics.”
- Videotapes:
 - Onondagas vs. New York State* 23:00
 - The “Bust” of Timothy Leary* 35:00 the view of the Black Panther Party
 - In the Event Anyone Disappears* 45:00 corrections officers
 - Junk* 30:00 heroin addiction
 - Poultry Waste Management* 13:30 Cornell University work
 - Canadarago Lake* 30:00 water pollution
 - Kick* 25:00 junkies
 - Three Poems by Neal Spitzer* 8:00 visual realization of poetry

IVP’s staff was Phil Jones, Arts and Program Director; Joe Seale, Administrative Director; David Way, Arts and Communications; James Novack, Technical Director; Jon Reis, Community Activities; and Sue Grandon, Arts Director. The Ithaca Video Project was partially funded by a grant from the New York State Council on the Arts.

1974-1975

A 1974 brochure from 1975-75 adds other programs:

- Commissioned Video Production included concept, production, post-production and distribution
- Advertising and Public Relations media for presentations; graphic design and layout
- Systems Design and Consultation
- International Media Production crew and equipment for location productions
- Tapes tape and film catalogue listed works available for free in studio playback, international tape exchange and tape and film rental.

Tapes included:

After the Mountains, More Mountains
Canadarago Lake, produced by Phil Wilde
Commentary on Black Graduate Education
Directions in Afro-American Art: Exhibition at Herbert F. Johnson Museum
Drug Laws: A student View
Feedback - A Cognitive Centering Device
In the Event Anyone Disappears, produced by Third World Newsreel
Junk
Kick, produced by James Sheldon
La Citadelle: Haiti’s Eighth ‘Wonder’
Lesbian Mothers produced by Norma Pontes and Rita Moreira, Queer Blue Light
Movable Type - A Media Poetry Show
Onondaga Nation vs. New York State: A Question of Sovereignty
Owl Creek Stone Cold Mountain
Owl Creek Stone Minstrels

Philly Folk Festival, produced by Reading Community Workshop
St. Louis Blues Videomation, by Philip Mallory Jones
The Bust of Timothy Leary
Tides: A Media Expansion
TV Graphics produced by Educational Television Center, Cornell University
Zobo Funn Band

Films available were

A Moment of Harmony
Marijuana Don't Grow in Harlem
No Place for Me
The Soul of Pomona by Kevin Huart
Omen; Star Garden; Tides by Philip Mallory Jones.

Personnel are listed as: Philip Mallory Jones, Director; Joseph A. Seale, Administrator; Yvonne Brown, Administrative Assistant; James Novack, Technical Director; David Way, Production Coordinator; Frank Goto, Production Assistant; Gunilla Musselman, Art Director; Jon Reis, Photographer; Kevin Huart, Filmmaker; Rick Blake, New York City Representative; and Fred Mangones, Carribean Representative.

1974 – 1976

IVP indicates that initial growth has led to a wide range of collaborations between artists and others in the community. "We are literally on the brink of making a serious impact on the local cable system, developing wider distribution via PBS." One major goal was to advance the video capability to "full ½" and 1" color origination and editing". It was noted that 1" stability was necessary for the wider distribution plans IVP was developing. The Videomation program was also noted, along with a need by that program for substantial equipment upgrades in the area of interface systems allowing IVP to combine film and video formats. A new project was defined, entered jointly with the Ministry for the Preservation of National Monuments in Haiti. "This project entails doing a feasibility study on establishing a video production center in Port-au-Prince, and producing a pilot program. The pilot will document the Ministries efforts to restore the Citadel of Henri Cristophe, built during the Haitian Revolution. The restoration project is being directed by Frederick Mangones, native Hairian and one of the founders of Ithaca Video Project."

-Ithaca Video Project Projections 1974-1976 document

1980

In a 1980 in an article published in *The Independent* article Fran Platt with Ann Volkes and Gerry Pallor wrote, "Picturesque Ithaca, perched on a hillside at the foot of Cayuga Lake, is known to most people as the home of Cornell University. But there's video magic afoot downtown: the Ithaca Video Projects [IVP] -- production aid for most professional video artists, and the prestigious Ithaca Video Festival. A large, airy, carpeted studio with a fine mountain view is located within a short walk of Ithaca's commercial center, upstairs from a well equipped arts supply store. [In the 80's,] IVP's 3/4" cassette editing system [could] be rented at a rate of \$50/day. 24-hour access [was] available; and the tension of a long, grueling editing session [could] be alleviated by a round or two at the ping-pong table. The latter amenity typifies Phil and Gunilla's warm, informal style and personalized concern for their clients. In the past, the Production Aid Program [had] mainly served local cultural organizations, on a commission basis, but clients from outside the Finger Lakes region and even out-of-state [were] actively sought. If a proposal [was] particularly interesting and lack[ed] sufficient funding, services - concept development, 3/4" portable production equipment, crew, supplies and/or rough editing - may [have been] provided gratis. Phil and Gunilla often work[ed] with performing artists, and they look forward to expanding their

studio space to accommodate dance and theatre companies.” (1)

Ithaca Video Projects, Inc.’s staff in 1980 was composed of Philip Mallory Jones, Executive Producer and Debra Schweitzer, Associate Producer.

1981

A brochure (c1981) lists the following activities:

- Media Center – equipment access, editing, workshops
- Production services – full professional services for broadcast, cable or closed-circuit
- IVP Productions - original fiction and documentary videotapes
- Production Aid – IVP accepts proposals for artists projects which receive equipment support if accepted
- Annual Ithaca Video Festival – national touring exhibition and broadcast series. Selection by panel review.
- Tapes

Black, White and Married 58:30, 1979 interracial marriage. Produced with WNET TV Lab.

In the Pictures 28:00, 1978 portrait of a choreographer

Jan: Take 2 18:00, 1977 a Broadway performer’s relationship with her mother

The Trouble I’ve Seen 10:00, 1976 impressions of black rural Georgia

No Crystal Stair 12:00, 1975 montage of black music and poetry

Beyond the Mountains, More Mountains 12:00, 1974 impressions of the Haitian people

Staff: Philip Mallory Jones (Director), Gunilla Mallory Jones (Associate Director), David Berry (Assistant Director)

1982-1984

The description of IVP activities centers around the videotape collection described as 160 festival titles and 12 other productions, including 8 years of Ithaca Video Festival programming. Distribution of 172 titles, including festival titles, for rental or purchase. Production services and equipment access aren’t offered.

- *Beyond Video: Media Alliance Directory I*, 1984

The 9th Annual Ithaca Video Festival received funding from the New York State Council on the Arts in 1982-83. *Afterimage* reported in February 1984 that the Festival which consisted of 22 tapes might not be circulated. 80 weeks of festival rentals had to be secured in order to meet costs; the 8th Annual Festival had booked only 75 weeks. The Festival in previous years had experienced cost overruns, which had been met with income from other projects. By Spring 1983 IVP couldn’t supply promotional materials to Festival venues. NYSCA’s position was that if IVP couldn’t circulate the Festival, that future support wouldn’t be forthcoming.

In 1982-83 Ithaca Video Project had decided to initiate several new programs in the coming year and also to drop the workshop program. A new producers symposium project, a regrant program for artists, publication of a video magazine on disc called *Imagine*, renovation of the studio, and continuation of the annual festival were all proposed directions for IVP for 1983-84. IVP received funding from NYSCA for only the Festival and for co-sponsorship of an individual artist’s project by Dan Reeves. IVP indicated that several other sources of funding which the organization had expected, had failed to materialize. The added projects had put a burden on the organization both fiscally and administratively.

By Summer 1983 IVP had to move from the studio and offices which had been occupied for 10 years; the organization kept operating for awhile by producing videotapes, and commercial productions.

Ithaca Video Project ceased activities around 1984. Many of the videotapes in the collection were deposited at the Media Center of Visual Studies Workshop.

Videomation Description from Ithaca Video Project Projections 1974-1976 document

“Videomation is the main project stimulating our development of video.film interface systems. This is a concept and project which has been growing for over two years, and has become a primary aspect of our program Videomation is an experiment in creating non-linear visual experience, which conveys coherent information and emotion, in a manner that is both educational and entertaining. It is a technique of telling many stories simultaneously, in such a way that they all fit together, visually and conceptually, to give a many-sided view of a person or people’s life-experience. Videomation is a synthesis of video images and technology in live-action film, photographs, air brush graphics and cell animation. These images are weaved together in successive stages of transposition to video tape. Another generation is added by processing the taped images through a video synthesizer. Finally, all the generations are combined through a complex matt-matrix using the precise frame-by-frame composition on animation stand and optical printer. The result is a constantly changing mosaic of color, form and depth; an environment beyond fact or fantasy. Each element of the composite image is discrete and identifiable as they grow into and out of each other. And together they form a total moving image which has its own coherence, meaning and impact. This concept is analogous to the basic characteristics of African drumming and singing. Thus it is the perfect compliment to the subject of its first full execution, the development of Black music in the Western hemisphere from 1400 to 1960. Graphically, this subject has only been presented in very straight forward linear fashion. Videomation will achieve visually the depth and complexity inherent in the music itself. The original images are being derived from archival photographs and films, plus original video, film, photographs and graphics. In conjunction with this project we look forward to building productive working relationships with other media centers in the North East”.

Ithaca Video Festival Pamela Susan Hawkins

The Annual Ithaca Video Festival, established in 1975, “presents a selection of the finest independent video productions. The Festival is dedicated to promoting the work of professional video artists and producers. The closed-circuit exhibition is screened in museums, galleries, libraries and school throughout the United States, plus Japan and Europe. The Festival is well known for presenting the work of prominent video artist as well as giving valuable exposure to emerging artists. Each Festival is composed of examples of the various genres of video art, affording the viewer an unequalled overview of contemporary art.”

“Since 1975 the Annual Ithaca Video Festival has brought the 20th century’s emerging art form - VIDEO - to museums, galleries, libraries and schools... “ (2) “The Festival [was] the brainchild of Phil Jones, director of the Ithaca Video Projects... The first Festival, which didn’t travel, featured eight tapes chosen from a total of 35 entries.” (4)

The 4th Annual Ithaca Video Festival was presented at the Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse. Works by Ann Volkes, Peter Bettendorff, Skip Blumberg, Tobe Carey, Doris Chase, James Edwards, Alan Esner/Jamie Newman, Ernest Gusella, Gary Hill, Leland Johnston, Steven King, Mitchell Kriegman, Pat Lehman, Eva Maier, Laurie McDonald, Michael Moser, Alan Powell, N.O.V.A.C., Marilyn Rivchin/John Reaves, Karen Simon-Petersen, Vibeke Sorensen, John Sanborn/Kit Fitzgerald, Diane Spodarek, Edin

Velez and Bill Viola played 5 hours a day. Groups could also make special arrangements for morning viewing. (3)

In the 1982, 7th Annual Ithaca Video Festival “19 tapes were chosen from 290 entries by four judges (Jones, Carvin Eison of the [then]-defunct Television Workshop at WXXI-TV, Rochester...; Barbara London [then] assistant curator for video at the Museum of Modern Art; and Arthur Tsuchiya, [in 1979] a media program analyst at the New York State Council on the Arts)... According to Jones the panel looked for diverse approaches to subject matter, as well as innovation and craft. These criteria explain both the overall quality and the impressive eclecticism of the festival” Some of the artists included in the festival were: Tom Adair and Kenneth Robins; Dana Atchley and Eric Metcalfe; Ros Barron; Christopher Coughlin, Denise Milan, and Nana Vasconcelos; Blondell Cummings and Shirley Clarke; Peter D’Agostino; Ed Emshwiller; Kit Fitzgerald and John Sanborn; Shalom Gorewitz; Gary Hill; Taka Imura; Eva Maier; Dan Reeves and Jon Hilton; John Sturgeon; Neecy Twinem; Steina Vasulka and Woody Vasulka with Jeffrey Schier’s Digital Image Articulator. The 7th Annual Video Festival traveled to over 34 cities. (4)

“The producers of the ... touring Video Festival ... [were] pleased to offer the 8th Annual Ithaca Video Festival for closed-circuit exhibition beginning May 1, 1982. The Festival includes the work of twenty accomplished video artist/producers, exploring the full potential for provocative and eloquent electronic art. The work is selected competitively from 300-400 entries by a panel of renowned artists/producers, curators and critics. Tapes are selected on the basis of creative use of the medium, execution and inventiveness.

The Festival package consist[ed] of four 60 minute 3/4” cassettes onto which the works [were] assembled with titles. With the tapes [came] printed programs containing description of the works, artist’s bios and short essays on the field of video art by noted critics. Posters listing the artist included in the Festival and exhibition sites, with space for local specifics, [were] also provided. Deadline for inclusion on the poster [was] March 20, 1982.

“The [8th] Annual Ithaca Video Festival [was] made possible by support from the National Endowment for the Arts and New York State Council on the Arts.” (2)

1. Fran Platt with Ann Volkes, Electronic Arts Intermix and Anthology Film Archives and Gerry Pallor, Young Filmmakers/Video Arts, “Upstate Report part II,” *The Independent*, Foundation for Independent Video and Film, New York City, May 80, vol. 3, no. 4, page 19.
2. 1982 Ithaca Video Projects -- Flyer on the 8th Annual Ithaca Video Festival, 1982
3. “Everson Museum of Art Bulletin, June-July-August 1978,” Everson, Museum of Art, Syracuse, 1978.
4. Lucinda Furlong, “State of the Art Scan: The Ithaca Video Festival,” *Afterimage*, Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester, January 1982, pgs. 12-14.
5. Ithaca Video Project, manilla brochure file folder, 1973[?].
6. Ithaca Video Project Inc., Poster and Tape and Film Catalogue, 1974[?].
7. *Videoscope*, Vol. 1 No. 2, 1977
8. *Video Resources in New York State*. Film Bureau. 1975
9. *Beyond Video: Media Alliance Directory I*, 1984
10. Victor Ancona. Gunilla and Philip Mallory Jones. *Videography*, July 1980.
11. Ithaca Video Project Projections 1974-1976 document